

What is claimed is:

1. A cartridge for a hand operated food processor comprising a blade holder having at least one blade holder demi-lock for cooperating with a mating casing demi-lock on a casing to together form a quick-release lock for retaining the cartridge in the casing, said cartridge including at least one blade held by the blade holder utilizable for piercing and cutting food.
2. The cartridge of claim 1 wherein the blade holder holds at least one series of aligned blades.
3. The cartridge of claim 1 where the blade holder demi-lock is a recess in the blade holder for receiving the casing demi-lock that is in the form of a spring biased latch projection.
4. The cartridge of claim 1 wherein the blade holder includes two demi-locks in the form of cam surfaces mating with two casing demi-locks in the form of locking cams that operate against the cam surfaces to lock the cartridge in the casing.
5. The cartridge of claim 1 wherein the cartridge has three parallel series of aligned blades.
6. The cartridge of claim 2 wherein the number of blades in each series is at least ten, each of which has a width of from about 1 to about 4 mm and the cartridge is for a meat tenderizer.

7. The cartridge of claim 2 wherein the number of blades in each series is less than five, each of which has a width of from about 1 to about 4 cm and the cartridge is for a food chopper.

8. The cartridge of claim 3 wherein the cartridge is provided with at least two mirror image recesses so that the cartridge can be inserted and locked into the casing in a plurality of orientations.

9. A food processor having a housing comprising the cartridge of claim 1 and a casing holding the cartridge, said casing having at least one blade holder demi-lock to cooperate with a casing demi-lock to together form a quick release lock that securely retains the cartridge in the casing, said cartridge being easily removable from the casing by releasing the quick release lock.

10. The food processor of claim 9 wherein the quick release lock comprises at least one spring biased latch projection that protrudes into a recess in the blade holder of the cartridge and the cartridge is released by moving the projection against the spring bias out of the recess to release retention of the cartridge within the casing.

11. The food processor of claim 10 wherein the spring biased latch projection is a plastic tab on the casing having a projection biased into the recess in the cartridge by the spring effect of plastic memory of the tab.

12. The food processor of claim 10 wherein the spring biased latch projection comprises a projection movable in a groove in the casing and a projection spring biasing the projection toward an end of the groove into the recess in the cartridge.

13. The food processor of claim 12 wherein the latch projection is secured through the groove to a control button so that movement of the control button toward the spring moves the latch projection out of the recess to release the cartridge from the casing.

14. A food processor comprising:

- a housing comprising at least one blade for piercing and cutting food, each of said blades having side surface portions and a cutting tip edge portion;

- a base provided with openings through which the at least one blade can pass to pierce and cut food, said base comprising a fixed base portion and a removable base portion, said removable base portion being provided with a sufficient number of longitudinal slots open at one end of the slots so that the slots in the removable base portion can be placed over the side surface portions of each of the blades without encountering the cutting tip edge portions of each of the blades;

- means for securing and releasing the removable base portion to the fixed base portion; and,

- means for securing the fixed base portion to the housing permitting retraction of the base relative to the housing so that upon retraction the blades extend through the slots and beyond the base to pierce and cutting food in contact with the base.

15. The food processor of claim 14 wherein the housing comprises at least one series of aligned blades.

16. The food processor of claim 14 wherein the slots widen proximate the open end of the slots to assist in guiding the blades into the slots.

17. The food processor of claim 14 wherein the means for securing the fixed base portion to the housing comprises a pair of tubes at opposing ends of the fixed base portion that fit into retaining cavities in the housing and housing springs within the housing that outwardly bias the tubes so that points of the blades are within the slots and do not extend beyond the base and so that a force applied to drive the housing toward the base causes compression of the housing springs permitting the tubes to further enter the housing thus reducing distance between the housing and the base thus causing the blades to extend through the slots and beyond the base to pierce and cut food in contact with the base.

18. The food processor of claim 14 wherein the means for securing and releasing the removable base portion to the fixed base portion comprises a pair of longitudinal grooves in the fixed base portion and mating longitudinal flanges in the removable base portion so that the flanges can be slid into the grooves at the time that the slots in the removable base portion are placed over the side surface portions of the blades.

19. The food processor of claim 18 wherein the flanges are removably retained within the grooves by means of at least one detent in a flange that mates and latches with a latch protrusion in the fixed base portion.

20. The food processor of claim 14 wherein the housing comprises a casing, and a cartridge retained by the casing, said cartridge comprising a blade holder holding and at least one blade for piercing and cutting food, said food processor being provided with means for removably connecting and retaining the cartridge in the casing.

21. The food processor of claim 20 wherein the means for removably connecting and retaining the cartridge in the casing comprises at least one recess in the blade holder for receiving a spring biased latch projection from the casing for retaining the cartridge in the casing and a spring biased latch projection from the casing retaining the cartridge.

22. The food processor of claim 10 where the food processor is a meat tenderizer.

23. The food processor of claim 10 where the food processor is a food chopper.